

OBITUARIES

Walter Morrison

Champion of the people of Corkerhill, Glasgow

WALTER Morrison was the longstanding ambassador for Corkerhill, and a persistent thorn in the flesh of officialdom in promoting his corner of Glasgow. Proud to be "a bloody nuisance to planners and councillors", he stopped at nothing and no-one in trying to ensure that Corkerhill gained what he believed it deserved.

By Glasgow standards, Corkerhill is a tiny housing scheme, a pocket of just 1300 tenants. But Morrison helped his community to draw attention to itself, to be proud of who lived there and to make its mark.

He and his team brought internationalism to Corkerhill by gaining recognition from the World Health Organisation in an aspect of community health, the only community in the UK to qualify.

When the award-winning community centre was closed after a long-running dispute with Glasgow City Council, Morrison refused to bow out quietly, defiantly holding a flag-lowering ceremony as a final protest. On the last day, a large crowd turned out to see the flag of the WHO solemnly lowered over the centre.

Morrison's service to his parish weighed heavily on him and his family. In a quarter of a century, his campaign for recognition of Corkerhill and secretaryship of Corkerhill Community Council left little time for anything else in his busy life.

In 25 years with the community council, Morrison successfully led moves for safety measures in the area, including speed bumps, safe-play areas for children and CCTV cameras at railway stations. A long-time road safety campaigner, he was knocked down four years ago at a busy city-centre crossing. Determined to raise support for a pedestrian crossing, he held a vigil for over 100 days at the corner of Queen Street and Ingram Street.

When he was made MBE for community services in 1998, a retired Glasgow District Council official who several times had had to handle fall-out from

Walter's initiatives nevertheless remarked with appreciation: "Some folk don't deserve their gongs. But Walter really does".

It was a view well supported by Glasgow's one-time lord provost Dr Michael Kelly, who, writing in *The Herald* six years ago, referred to one proposal of Walter's as being "sure to put a lot of noses out of joint. I don't think Walter really cares. He wants action and he's going to annoy the hell out of people until he gets it".

In this case, the action concerned targeting a private builder to replace some of the decaying council housing with a mixed development, providing in the process the planning gain of turning a parcel of land into a wildlife habitat.

When the M77 carved through the south side of Glasgow, it was Corkerhill, led by Walter Morrison, who voiced the loudest protest, painting vivid pictures of greenbelt torn up to be replaced by noise and air pollution. A generation before, the battle had been over the future of the once-mighty railway yards that created the "model village" of Corkerhill, and after that, the reinstatement of the Paisley Canal Line.

A born battler, Morrison rarely indulged in condemnation even when George Square administrators or "mindless morons" threatened his patch. His entry into community activity came as a 15-year-old in Govan in 1940 in the wartime Local Defence Volunteers, predecessor of the Home Guard. The following year he saw action in the Clydebank Blitz, defending Govan in case enemy paratroopers landed on Clydeside soil.

He'd lied about his age to enter the LDV, and he lied once again at 16 to volunteer as a paratrooper for the remainder of the war.

He died in his 80th year, and is survived by his wife, Betty, and children, Grant and Leigh.

Walter Morrison, MBE, born 1924, died February 6, 2004.

GORDON CASELY

Baillie John Flanagan, Glasgow City Council spokesperson on community councils, writes:

Known affectionately as the Mossbank Scribe, Walter's eloquence and debating skills were the stuff of local legend. Always well dressed, he was a distinctive, some would say dashing figure, but above all he was a man of the people, approachable and always willing to listen and help wherever he possibly could.

He was unafraid to confront power structures and made frequent use of his right to speak up on behalf of the residents of his area. He cared passionately about improving the quality of life of ordinary people – not just within his own community, but globally.

He recognised the greater issues contained within his own personal experiences – for example he joined CND in the late 1960s, after his son had become frightened by the trains carrying nuclear weapons to Faslane, passing along the railway line behind his house.

Committed to making his community, and all communities, safer places to live, Walter set up and managed a groundbreaking advice centre in Corkerhill, Pollok, which gained accreditation from the World Health Organisation. In 1998 the Queen recognised Walter's achievements by awarding him with the MBE.

Walter dedicated his life to the community and will be sadly missed by the staff of the Community Council Resources Centre, Glasgow City Council, the community councils across the city and myself.

CONTACT

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